Dear Dick, Galley

6/29/75

It has become open season for assassination fakes. With publishers involved and claimed large sums of money as expression of publisher interest.

Not only McDonald. I got four other names last night. All California nut country and all Fensterwald connected. Also with claim to Church committee interest, too.

McDonald returned to California on schedule. However, he declined the interview he had promised my friend. His reason:Starr's orders. Without Starr's approval no interview. Starr failed to return a number of calls so my friend, who knows him, called Fensterwald, who had no reluctance in telling all about the content of the McDonald new version. Even what is not in it, like the detail I got from McDonald about where "Saul" was located.

My friend told McDonald "I'll go with what I've got if you don't talk," so McDonald called Starr at his home and got him to talk to my friend. Johnny tried very pleasantly to talk my friend out of it on the claim that "hundreds of thousands of dollars are riding on this." He added that he represents AP, they want the story, and he is not giving it to them. (Whatever happened to the four weeks Sandy Smith spent out there for Time? And that McDonald story about his story being all up and down the west coast?)

My friend told Starr this was silly talk because he knew (I'd told him) several people who had seen the ms. that had been kicking around for three years and had spoken to some, that there just was no secret. He then proceeded to tell Starr some of the content, including what is not in the book, where "Saul" was supposed to have been, the more outlandish of assassination hour-long lurks, in a lady's room. Starr didn't even ask him how he knew although McDonald had told us Monday. (It was from Fensterwald.) Starr had no way of knowing what my friend knew or how because he has to know that the old ms has been around for years, which is how I was able to get a copy so fast.

When Starr would not budge and McDonald heeded Starr my friend went with his story, aired Friday. It was less than complimentary, which is hardly what it will be when and if the whole fake is known. My friend covered the entire Garrison fiasco and has been on this story for ten years to my knowledge. He is not alone among reporters and talk-show people in having followed the story closely and with enough knowledge without priming to demolish these fakes. (More on this follows. Barney should take note.)

McDonald did confirm the long and friendly relationship with Fensterwald. Fensterwald did not deny the lawyer-client relationship and did affirm a long and close one (of which I've known since not later than 1969).

The story aired is the essence of the book. There was little reaction from others in the media, which did not go for it. That it was less than complimetary is my friend's description of his own words.

I have questions about a pro like John stonewalling like this when he knows the reporter already has the information he needs. After the story had been aired without McDonald's name on McDonald's promise of an interview after his return. These questions would be stronger if Barney had not turned the deal down or if John did not have another in view. My friend even agreed to hold off as Starr asked if Starr would agree to a taped interview with McDonald until Starr authorized release of it. Starr could easily have agreed to this if all he wanted was a short period of silence. In the course he took Starr generated the maximum possible interest. Either way it went could have served his purposes, I think, without knowing his immediate objective.

My friend was not able to make as thorough a check as he and I'd have liked at the track. Those to whom he spoke estimated McDonald's salary at about $40,000. They all told him that playing the races there is ground for dismissal but it is still common employee practise.

After taping the story that was aired my friend then flew off to the other

fakers, down in San Diego. The names I remember are Richard Popkin and his wife, Don Freed and one Jeff Cohen. I have all this taped with assent. I spoke to my friend just before going to bed and there is no point in remembering 100% of the details.

Popkin is rabid on this subject, professor of philosophy that he is. Interestingly he also began with the New York Review, an article that grew into a bad book that is on the one hand a nasty ripoff of the earliest three books and on the other a justification of the Warren Commission. (Avon did the book and tried to get me to file an injunction to publicize the book before publication. Their initiative, not mine.) The others are sometimes even worse, more irrational. All are connected with Fensterwald. Freed was associated with Lane in the book of Executive Action, plagiarized from the spook "black book" originally L'Amérique Brule. Garrison, one of its intended victims, persuaded the authors to retitle it Farewell America. The book was produced by the French CIA, SDECE. I suspect real CIA involvement in it, Freed is currently stealing my work on the King case with Cohen when I declined to sign a contract that would have tied me up and down with no front money and no meaningful assurances of anything. He is working on a parlay movie deal, the first on the RFK case, the second on King's assassination. Assuming Freed told me the truth, foreign money is behind both. Cohen either can't distinguish between fact and fiction in his supposedly non-fiction writing or doesn't care. He comes from the Detroit area.

In short, they are all fakers.

This new stuff is not new except for some detail. All has collapsed in the past, as McDonald's also did. I have had the essence in my files for years. It is so incredible I stopped collecting it.

They also have an assassin named Castillo. He was also on the second floor (the spot picked from the actual pictures in my second book) only in a different building, the one directly east of the Texas School Book Depository Building. Castillo is supposed to have been programmed like a Manchurian Candidate. He allegedly had two roles, to shoot Kennedy and then to kill himself. He had six others in that one building with him on that one of a number of "teams." (Switch on Saul to have killed Oswald. Castillo was to have been the patsy and to have self-destructed.) This whole story was demolished years ago by the Philippine police, who had arrested Castillo on other charges as I recall. I have a file on it. This time there are a few added fictions in details and tapes.

They also have the old Richard Case Nagell stuff that Garrison had and of which all who wanted got copies. Nobody could do anything with it, including Garrison and Fensterwald and former FBI agent named Turner (one of Hoover's professional thieves) as well as at least one Nixonite. Nagell is a story-book character. He was intelligence and he actually did survive the disintegration of an Electra plane some 10,000 feet up in the Baltimore area. He appears to be as bright as he does crazy. He is persuasive. Fensterwald wanted me to contact a contact of Nagell's years ago but the ploy was so incredible I would not take the time. Another spook type. Briefly Nagell claims to have had advance knowledge of the plan to assassinate JFK and to have shot up a bank only to get himself jailed and thus to have an alibi. The only way to establish an alibi?

This gang, while claiming also to be dealing with major publishers, also is going as public as it can. (I'll have a report from another friend on this stuff probably tomorrow. A San Francisco reporter friend went down to San Diego the day after the first one.) They have an appointment with Mike Madigan on the Church committee staff Wednesday, the same day the staffer with whom I spent Thursday morning is coming here. (A Senator was in on part of Thursday morning. He is an old friend who is coming up after returning from a European trip.) They have a basic misunderstanding of what the Church committee will and will not do. My Post Mortem provides them with the limit of their interest. They simply will not attempt to "solve" the crime. If they had the time, which they do not, they have the opposite intent. Their

interest is in the way the executive agencies function, which is my focus uniquely. Only with the proofs of malfunction and the lurid details in documents, not the ravings of the mentally sick.

The San Diego nuts also have an appointment with Attorney General Levi's assistant for some time this coming week, I've forgotten the day. The DJ and the FBI are anxious to collect all this garbage. It provides their one defense. McDonald does the same thing for them.

All this stuff is terrible stuff. Each gang of fakers destroys the others if listened to. None of anything I have seen or heard of is even reasonable, leave lone possible on the basis of that fact which is established as fact.

There has been a similar ploy in Atlanta on the King assassination. I think I have it traced to its self-promoting sources. They are not the original source. Once again that seems to be Fensterwald.

The San Diego and Atlanta games seem to have enticed Dick Gregory. San Diego explicitly. What he and Ralph Schoenman did for the Rockefeller Commissions with their fabrications all ripped off from the most dubious types seems not to have sufficed. They did the Ford/spook job and are doing it again, the one certain result of all this faking.

Is what is meant by a "black book" becoming more apparent?

It is a kind of Department of Disinformation operation that builds sympathy for the seeming targets of the books.

Ford was one of the more active Members of the Warren Commission. It is not by accident that he selected Belin, from this common past, to run the Rockefeller Commission. Belin is capable of anything, with sanctimony. He personally framed the cases that seemed to put Oswald at the scene of both crimes and in each case personally suppressed the evidence that proved it impossible/~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Ford also is the one commercializer and if you've read Whitewash IV you know how crookedly and illegally. Criminally. He can have problems come election time.

The name of Levi's assistant to be seen is John Buckley. This is not an uncommon name but it is that of the man who under the code name "Fat Jack" was part of Hunt's Watergating. Former FBI agent.

There is much more afoot. Like the assassination was by disgruntled members of the families of those who died in the sub Thresher. Also, like with Nagell, leading to predictions, in that case to John Connally. Oh, yeah. Nagell was a double agent. KGB too.

Popkin reached Sy Hersh with this stuff. On a public playform in St. Louis Hersh described Popkin as "full of shit," direct quote. Popkin's current approaches include CBS and Rolling Stone, besides book publishers. Popkin was in Washington several weeks ago. Last week a separate CBS crew was in Calif. I've been keeping up on this because of the possibility (currently probability) of another videowhitewash. I do not think their show will hold until the scheduled November date or that they can get away with another whitewash with what will be known by then. I may know more Tuesday when the researcher for the project's King assassination part comes here. I do not think CBS will put this fortune on film to have it described as ~~xx~~ a printable variant of shit.

I've gone into this detail for your information and Barney's consideration.

Best,

Harold Weisberg

cc: Barney Rosset, Fred Jordan